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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANTANANARIVO 000414

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [MA](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICAN CHARGE DISCUSSES MEDIATION EFFORT
AND CONCERN RE RAVALOMANANA AND MERCENARIES

Classified By: DCM ERIC STROMAYER FOR REASONS 1.4 D AND E

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador, DCM and DATT met June 8 with South African Charge Marius Conradie to discuss current state of mediation efforts and continuing rumors about possible recruitment of mercenaries by Marc Ravalomanana in South Africa or Swaziland to support his effort to return to power here in Madagascar. Conradie expressed concern about continuing rumors and the seriousness with which his government would treat any evidence of an effort by Ravalomanana to use South Africa as a staging area or recruitment base for mercenaries. This would be "unacceptable." He also mentioned that President Zuma and the Swazi King plan to meet June 9 in Capetown to discuss Madagascar. While expressing doubts about the likely outcome of the ongoing mediation in Madagascar which "seems to be going in circles," Conradie said that it may be time for the SAG to pressure Ravalomanana to tone down his rhetoric and unsubstantiated claims of South African support, or risk no longer being welcome in SA. End Summary

South Africa and Ravalomanana

¶2. (C) During the meeting Conradie mentioned Ravalomanana's problematic presence in South Africa. Early on he had requested SAG provision of a Radio transmitter to broadcast to Madagascar. The SAG refused to provide it. He also noted recent public claims by Ravalomanana that he had the support of President Zuma to return to Madagascar as President. Conradie said that President Zuma had only called for the restoration of a constitutional order. In Conradie's view the continued inflammatory rhetoric from Ravalomanana was not in anyone's interest and he said he felt that given continuing rumors of efforts to recruit mercenaries in or around South Africa, his government would take a hard line with Ravalomanana, on this in particular. He further noted that the ex-president's passport expires soon so there is some discussion in SADC as to who might be able to provide him with some sort of provisional travel papers or residence status. South Africa does not want to do so.

Mediation not very promising

¶3. (C) Noting that the mediation had not progressed much since May 22, Conradie expressed particular concern regarding the current apparent agreement terms that would permit HAT leader Rajoelina to run the transitional government and run for president simultaneously (a possibility the US has flagged as inherently flawed to the mediators and contact group on several occasions). Further, it appears that none of the mediators are talking to Ravalomanana. In fact, Conradie had just heard that though tasked with doing so, the SADC team leader Themba Absalom Dlamini had not in fact met with Ravalomanana on his return to Swaziland ten days ago. Conradie believes it may be time for the SAG to weigh in with Ravalomanana to try and move the mediation forward. The longer the deadlock in the mediation continues, the more likely that Rajoelina may simply press ahead and hold some sort of elections on his own. While trying to coop Zafy and perhaps Ratsiraka, and leaving Ravalomanana in the cold, this

could doom one round of reconciliation efforts and elections to failure. This is not acceptable to the SAG. In general he noted that the AU mediation team seems to be willing to accept any compromise to get to an agreement even if fatally flawed by compromised principles. The Ambassador enlisted Conradie's help in again opposing this approach at the next contact group meeting (perhaps later this week).

¶4. (C) Comment: Conradie is an astute observer of the situation. We hope that based on our conversations the SAG may weigh in to discourage what we see as Ravalomanana's apparent continuing belief that he can somehow return here with mercenary or other military support. Such a course, would in our view, be more likely to rally all the Malgache military against such an intervention force -- and is in any case, almost certain to fail. His continued invocation of such a possibility to his supporters encourages their intransigence and inflames extremists on both sides, making progress in the mediation very difficult. End Comment

MARQUARDT